

COOPER PRESENTS AWARD TO JIMMY DICKENS

March 12, 2011

NASHVILLE - U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper presented a Congressional Award to one of country music's icons, Jimmy Dickens, at the Grand Ole Opry.

Jim Cooper: "Jimmy Dickens has already turned 90 years old. I wanted to make sure that everybody in America and the world knew that. In fact, I wanted to make sure that he's a little bit a part of American history. So we got a plaque for him, he's officially entered into the Congressional Record of the United States. Now, I want to do this the right way, Jimmy, so let me get down on your level here.

This man is country music royalty. He started—he started as a member of the Grand Ole Opry in 1948, which is even years before I was born. He has played with all the greats, from Hank Williams, Sr. through Brad Paisley. This man is a walking, talking miracle, and I want to single him out for two great blessings. One, he is living proof that nice guys finish first. And two, the best things in life come in very small packages. Jimmy—this is for you."

Jimmy Dickens: "Mr.—Mr. Cooper, may I, uh, in a few words, uh—I don't know how to explain this to you, I don't find the words in my vocabulary to tell you folks how much I appreciate this so very much. Uh—may God bless you all, and I hope that I'm worthy of this tremendous award, and I appreciate your kindness. Thank you sir."

Jim Cooper: "We'll be back in ten years for the hundredth."

Jimmy Dickens: "Never thought I'd run out of words. Oh mercy, thank you for your kindness, and I do appreciate that very much. I, uh...before we get through here, I'd like to do this old song...you've probably never heard it before, because it, it came out in...well, I suppose I could say my latest album, that came out in 1963, I think it was..."

Congressional Record for Little Jimmy Dickens

Mr. Cooper. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor James Cecil Dickens, better known as Little Jimmy Dickens, on the occasion of his 90th birthday. He may be a man of diminutive stature, but Little Jimmy, the renowned entertainer and Grand Ole Opry star, stands taller than the rest.

Jimmy Dickens was the first of thirteen children born to a West Virginia farming family and knew from a young age that he wanted to write and sing country music. He first appeared on local radio in the 1940s under the name "Jimmy the Kid" where he began building his reputation as the master of the country novelty song. Some of his early hits include "Take an Old Cold Tater (And Wait)" (1949), "I'm Little But I'm Loud" (1950), "Country Boy" (1949), and "A-Sleeping at the Foot of the Bed" (1950).

In 1948, Roy Acuff heard Jimmy and invited him to perform on the world-famous Grand Ole Opry stage at the Ryman Auditorium. Little Jimmy was an immediate favorite not only for his unforgettable songs, but also for his flamboyant style and country sense of humor. He became a permanent member of the Grand Ole Opry in 1948, and recently celebrated his 60th anniversary as the longest-tenured Opry member of all time.

Little Jimmy was signed to his first major label, Columbia Records, the same year he became an Opry Member. It was at that time that Dickens formed the band the Country Boys, whose line-up included top-flight musicians Jabbo Arrington, Grady Martin, Bob Moore, Buddy Emmons and Thumbs Carlisle. Dickens had a number of hits with the Country Boys, though none bigger than "May the Bird of Paradise Fly Up Your Nose" (1965), which reached number one on the country charts and hit the pop charts, as well. Little Jimmy holds the unique distinction of having hit records in every decade from the 1940s to the 1970s.

But Little Jimmy Dickens's music is only part of his story and only part of what makes him just as popular today as when he first burst onto the country music scene over 60 years ago. He is quick with a joke and he is kind-hearted. He always has time for his fans and often spends hours signing every last autograph after a show. In an ever-changing

music industry, Little Jimmy is a constant presence and a reminder that sometimes nice guys finish first.

Jimmy has long been adored by his country music colleagues as well, whether it be fellow legends like the late Hank Williams (who nicknamed Jimmy, "Tater") or modern-day superstar, Brad Paisley (who Jimmy often performs with). It is this adoration that earned him a spot in the Country Music Hall of Fame nearly 30 years ago.

Jimmy is celebrating his 90th year as anyone who knows him might guess he'd celebrate it—by entertaining his fans with good country music and humor. He's even worked his age into his act. "You know you're 90-years-old," Jimmy tells his fans, "when you drop something, bend over to pick it up, and think to yourself, 'is there anything else I can do while I'm down here?'"

And so, Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to ask my colleagues to join me in saluting Little Jimmy Dickens — an icon, a legend, and a global ambassador to country music.